



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE COMPILES LIST OF
1,000 INVERTEBRATES AS POTENTIAL CANDIDATES FOR ENDANGERED LIST

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has published a notice of review that identifies over 1,000 species of invertebrate animals as candidates for possible addition to the U.S. list of endangered and threatened species. The notice, published in the May 22, 1984 Federal Register, is the first such candidate list drawn up for invertebrates. Publication of the candidate notice does not constitute formal proposal of the species for addition to the endangered species list, however.

Invertebrates are animals without backbones and include species such as mollusks, insects, sponges, spiders, and shellfish. Fifty-one invertebrate species are currently listed as endangered or threatened. The number of invertebrate species worldwide is estimated to number several million. In contrast, nearly 20,000 vertebrate and 200,000 plant species are thought to exist.

The Endangered Species Act directs the Fish and Wildlife Service to review the status of species when scientific evidence indicates they may be endangered. To obtain that data, the Service has periodically compiled candidate lists as a tool to identify species for which formal listing may be justified. Candidate lists have been compiled for plants and vertebrates in the past.

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The notice mentions all known invertebrate species native to the United States that may warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act, based upon the best available data, as well as those species for which listing could be considered once more conclusive data becomes available.

The Service has assigned different levels of status to the species on the candidate list, based on nearly 3 years of data collection and review. Of the 1,000 invertebrates, the Service considers 35 species as meriting formal listing based on existing biological information.

Of the remainder, the Service feels that 841 species could be proposed for listing only if additional information about their status and biological vulnerability becomes available. A separate category of 141 invertebrates has been compiled to include those species whose extinction is suspected, or that do not meet criteria for listing under the act. The Service, however, is soliciting any additional data from the scientific community that might support a change in status for these latter species.

The candidate list of invertebrates is dominated by 335 species whose habitat is limited to the unique ecosystems of the Hawaiian Islands. These, and many other invertebrates on the list, represent animals that have evolved in very specialized areas--caves, windswept sand dunes, and isolated springs, for example. These restricted habitats, in many cases, make the species that much more vulnerable to natural or man-made disruptions.

Candidate species receive no protections under the Endangered Species Act. They must first be proposed for addition to the endangered and threatened species list and undergo an extensive public comment and review process before formal protections are extended to them. Identification of candidates encourages other Federal, State, local, and private agencies to consider such species in their land management activities, however.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has invited the submission of public comments and additional scientific data on its May 22, 1984 Federal Register notice. That information can be sent to the Director (OES), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240. Available biological information on individual candidate species can be obtained from the endangered species coordinators in Service regional offices, located in the section of the country where the species are found (Portland, Oregon; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Denver, Colorado; Twin Cities, Minnesota; Atlanta, Georgia; Newton Corner, Massachusetts; and Anchorage, Alaska).